

CRUCIFIED TOAD

NUMBER

1

3s 6d

50¢

DAVID EDWARD BATTON 1964

CONTENTS

COVER	— D.E. BRITTON —	pg1
CONTENTS & EDITORIAL		2
FILMIC FANTASY		3
VAMPIRE !		
SPIRITS OF THE DEAD }	— EDDY C. BERTIN —	
COMIX FANDOM	— STEVE MOORE —	7
ARTWORK by D.Britton		10
Fact Feature	The "Ghostel" — C.D. WINSTONE —	19
What of H.P. LOVECRAFT?	— AUTOLYCUS —	20
The Last Romantic	Clark Ashton Smith — S. J. SACKETT —	23
BACOVER	— DAVE FLETCHER —	28

hot sucks

a form of editorial...

At present, there is a conspicuous lack of well-produced magazines devoted to all forms of fantasy; the horror/fantasy film has it's own journals, as has the field of horror/sci-fi literature, and there has been a surprising growth of British comic 'zines in recent months.

CRUCIFIED TOAD hopes to embody all all of these factions, thus being able to publish contributions of a more varied, and consequently less

stagnant, nature that specialisation tends to produce. As well as written material, almost half of this issue's page-count consists of art-work. This I'd like to continue, balancing art-work with text.

I also plan to use one reprinted article each issue, each one being valid as they do not date and because of their rarity I doubt if any readers will have seen them before. In case you saw the adsheets for this issue, you may notice that the article by Stan Nicholls has not been included (mainly because he didn't finish it). Contributions will be gratefully accepted, & printed contributions will earn their artists/authors complementary copies of the issue they appear in.

CRUCIFIED TOAD NUMBER ONE

EDITED BY John Muir
THE EDITORIAL ADDRESS is 50, Holker St., Manchester, M13 0DE, ENGLAND.

THE PRICE is 3/6d + 6d p+p or 50p or its equivalent, advance copies postage free. Printed letters of comment earn their authors a free copy of the issue they appear in.

THIS MAGAZINE is a part of the **FREAKTOAD EMPYRE ENTERPRISES** and is distributed by

*** DAWN CHILD**
Enquiries should be sent to the edit. add.
ADVERTISING RATES
Professional ads - £10 per pg.+ in ratio
Non-pro - on request.

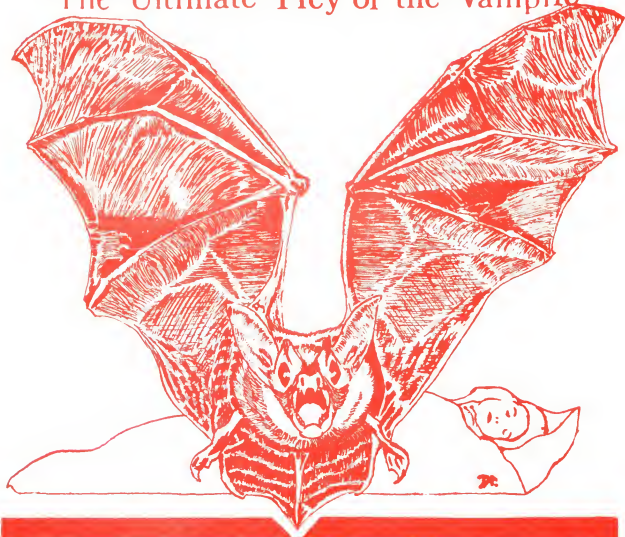
ART INDEX

david britton -- pgs. 1, 20, 21,
dave rowe ----- 3, 23,
moy ----- 10, 26,
dave fletcher ---- 28,
dave griffiths --- 25,
cos ----- 9,
jim cawthorn --- 24,

FILMIC FANTASY by Eddy C. Bertin

SPIRITS OF THE DEAD &

The Ultimate Prey of the Vampire



CINEMA REVIEWS

SPIRITS OF THE DEAD

FEDERICO FELLINI LOUIS MALLE ROGER VADIM and E. A. Poe

Here we have enough on our hands to drive a serious horror film lover insane. We have three talented directors - Vadim, Malle and Fellini, we have cinescope and colour, a choice of well-known stars and a wealth of E. A. Poe stories to choose from. It is the first French 'big-stars' film completely based upon fantastic material...and all I can advise you is: go see an old Frankenstein film in a drive in, and forget "Spirits of the Dead".

Already the American title is misleading, as only in the first of the trilogy can we fit spirits of the departed into the story. The original French title, HISTOIRES EXTRAORDINAIRES (Extraordinary Stories) was much better suited, being also the title of the first translation of Poe stories by Charles Baudelaire to be published in France, half-way through the 1800's. The three directors have each taken one story (two of them lesser known) and adapted it to suit their own needs. Luckily Poe never saw the film, he would have drunk himself to death even sooner.

ROGER VADIM, who has given us several memorable films these last years, especially of course the unforgettable ET MOURIR DU PLAISIR (Blood and Roses), has selected METZENGERSTEIN one of Poe's early stories, written when he was 23 and first published in 1836. The original short story deals with two rival horse lovers, the fanatical old Wilhelm Von Berlifitzig, and the younger Baron Fredericq Metzengerstein, who sets fire to the castle and stables of his rival and kills him. Metzengerstein is haunted from then on by a strange, enormous horse on one of the tapestries in his castle, it seeming to possess a strange life. When Metzengerstein mounts a horse found near his home, and which bears the brand of Berlifitzig, the horse on the tapestry disappears. The strange horse leads it's rider into a fire where he dies, and the smoke of the fire takes the shape of an enormous horse. Berlifitzig,

reincarnated in the horse, has taken his revenge.

Scriptwriters Daniel Boulanger and Roger Vadim have kept the essential storyline, but decided that yo-

uth and sex are more interesting than two fanatical horse maniacs. So they oppose a young woman Frederique Metzengerstein, rich, bored and interested in anything which has to do with eroticism, vice, abnormal sex and sadism, with her poor cousin Berlifitzig, who lives only for his stables. Being refused by this hermit is a new experience for Frederique, which changes her desire for her cousin into hate. She sets fire to his stables, and when he tries to save his dearest horse he dies in the flames. Out of the fire comes a beautiful black horse, which becomes an obsession to Frederique, who forsakes all her other pastimes and lives only for her rides on it. When the woods near the castle set on fire she mounts the black horse, and together they run into the purifying flames.

This film has beautiful use of sun and



colours in the photography, but little else. The story is extremely slow-moving, everything centres around Jan. Fonda's face, expressive, soft-sweet and bitter-hard at the same time. This is all very well, she is a beautiful woman, but it hardly makes a film. Peter Fonda's part is almost not worth mentioning, being practically a guest-star appearance. The fantastic side of the story is completely neglected, except for the appearance of the black horse. There is not the slightest suggestion that the horse is the reincarnation of Berlitzig, and the horse does not avenge its master's death: Frederique commits suicide. A well-made poetical documentary which should have been titled "Jane and the black horse". One should note, however, the haunting quality of the music in part of the score, a weird mixture of heart-beats and the sound of heart leaves, giving an excellent impression of approaching doom.

THE DEVIL is based on WILLIAM WILSON, a better known Poe story from 1839, with dialogues by DAVID L. LLOYD. The main film is faithful to the original story of the man who, in killing his 'other self', also destroys himself. With a Wilson runs into a church and tries to kill a priest. In flash-backs we learn that in his early youth he had been involved in a quarrel with his friend, and that the friend had been anything he wanted to be. Now it would be noted that the friend was a devil, rather late. Like THE DEVIL it has a boy down into a pit full of snakes and a man. Like THE DEVIL

nude girl onto a table and walking around her with a scalpel in his hands, explaining to his audience of fellow students at the University and to the terrified girl how he will cut her apart while still alive. His double always stops him. One evening when Wilson is in the Austrian army, he is mocked by an Italian countess. He plays cards with her and wins everything, including her own body. He undresses and whips her in public, but is thrown out of the circle of his friends when the double appears again and reveals that Wilson cheated with the cards. In a mad rush of anger, he runs after his alter-ego and stabs him to death. When the priest refuses to believe his story, Wilson throws himself from the tower of the church. In his body, the dagger is found which he left in the chest of the other Wilson he killed. Hyde has killed Jekyll, and in so doing, himself.

The story is fast-moving and has quite a good dialogue and characterisation, it has several heavily erotic and sadistic scenes, and a hallucinatory use of stop-motion pictures and flash-backs of Wilson falling to his death. I'm only sorry that Melle didn't give the second Wilson the gloating, whispering voice which Poe described in his story.

FELLINI's film is based on a practically unknown Poe story, NEVER MET THE DEVIL YOUR NAME, first published in 1841. It is an unimportant but slightly amusing piece of black humour, whose protagonist has the habit

of saying at any occasion "I bet my head to the Devil..." One day the Devil appears as an old gentleman, accepts the deal and collects his head when he wins. Fellini took the name of his 'hero' TOBY DAMMIT for his film. He throws Poe away completely, except for the title. Sometime after the last of the trilogy had started I heard a loud sound in the cinema. I thought it was Poe, turn-



in his grave, but it was only someone from the sleeping public who had lost his balance and had fallen from his seat. The film has had the distinction of being hailed by the press as a masterpiece, and the only worthwhile of the trilogy. It is none of both Bizarre, strange, mad, certainly. But horror, fantastic, E.A.Poe? Terence Stamp gives a superb performance as Toby Dammit, an English jeune-premier, permanently drunk and haunted by the Devil, who appears to him as a young girl, playing with a ball. He desperately wants to get away from the world and join the girl in her world of innocence. He comes to Italy to play the central part in a western, and obtains a new Ferrari car from the producers, but commits suicide the very first night in a mad run with the car. When the

sounds of the car crash die away, a young girl appears and takes Toby's head to play with as a ball. The film is full of splendid photography and sharp, biting satire on religion and the film industry, but the story is a mess of confusion.

SPIRITS OF THE DEAD is a failure, as a fantasy film (there is very little fantasy left in it), as a Poe film (it's murder on poor Poe) and even as entertainment (it's damn boring!). About twenty minutes of the whole, long trilogy are worth watching, consisting of a few macabre scenes, some splendid poetical photography and a few very well executed musical background pieces.

Distributed by FILMS MARCEAU (PARIS).

THE CAST - JANE FONDA as Frederique Metzengerstein, PETER FONDA as Von Berlifitzig, ALAIN DELON as William Wilson and TERENCE STAMP as Toby Dammit, with Brigitte Bardot, James Robertson Justice, Francoise Provost and Carla Marlier.

5 PLAYGIRLS WALKED INNOCENTLY INTO HIS ARMS....
....only to meet the devil in the flesh!

THE ULTIMATE PREY OF THE vampire

A black and white NORD FILM ITALIANA, originally entitled IL PREIDA ULTIMA DEL VAMPIRO, also released as VAMPIRES DESIRE and as THE PLAYGIRLS AND THE VAMPIRE

In the midst of a stormy night, a bus breaks down, not far from an old castle. The occupants, a broke manager and a group of strip-dancers, seek refuge in the castle and are almost turned out by the unseen master, when suddenly there seems to be a rapport between the unknown man and one of the girls. They are invited to stay for the night but are forbidden to leave their rooms. One of the girls disobeys (of course) and is promptly murdered. Apparently, she fell out of the window during her nightly walk, but we know that she was hunted by something horrible...The host and one of the girls fall in love with each other, each having the uncanny feeling that they've

met before. They discover the likeness of the girl to the portrait of a woman dead for 200 years. The second night they find another girl dead. She is buried, but the day after the grave is found open and the body gone. The heroine is frightened by the strange conduct of her host, and follows him down into a secret laboratory where he seems to be vainly searching for something. She is warned by her lover to leave the castle but doesn't. The following night a shadow creeps into her room. It turns out to be her loving host who has the intention of sinking his teeth into her neck. The girl has little appreciation for such a ges-



STEVE MOORE

THE NGANI SAILOR-MAN IS NO MATCH FOR THE STEEL-SINUED JUNGLE LORD WHO... WITH THE INSTINCTS OF THE JUNGLE IN HIS BLOOD... STANDS PANTING OVER HIS PREY. FOR NOW THAT THE PREY HAS BEEN CAPTURED... IT IS TIME TO FEAST!



Why are you a fan? I've often wondered just why people become fans, especially those who form the great non-productive "silent majority" of fans. For fandom, especially comic fandom, appears to be one of the most useless non-organisations ever formed.

Yes, I'm aiming this article mainly at comic fans, despite the fact that they may well be a smaller part of the audience. After all, comics is my thing...

Okay, so I called fandom useless, but perhaps that was a little sweeping - but fandom must have some purpose to keep it go-

ing, otherwise it will just stagnate and die. And regrettably, this purpose seems to be notably lacking from the majority of British fandom.

There is a stated purpose already in existence, but nobody seems to take much notice of it, in spite of the fact that it has been around for some time. It goes something like this: to promote the comic strip as a serious artistic and narrative form, to increase the number of adult comic strips, and to generally improve the medium. Faced with some of the stuff being put out in English comics today this may seem a pretty good idea - but is fandom doing anything about it?

Fandom in general is a rather large thing to take on, so let's cut down the field a little. Fans fall naturally into two categories; the productive and the non-productive. Non-productive fans we can discount from this right now. Oh sure, they have their uses - like they provide money, and readers. But a non-vocal group rarely changes anything.

An active fan can move in two directions: purely internally among fans, where anything he does is wholly intended for



fans, or in relation to the professionals.' Any fan who moves wholly amongst fans is unlikely to bring about any change in the professional field, so you could try going to the heart of the matter by attempting to change the point of view of the comics' editors.



LEROY WAS ABOUT TO TAKE A SPIN ON HIS SCOOTER, BUT WHEN HE PUT HIS JACKSON...

English comics are edited by guys who are paid to do one thing - make money - and let's face it, they've a pretty good idea of what they're doing. They know what the market is, and what to give it. The market is kids, and everything is designed for that market. Now, if an adult writes in saying he'd like to see more adult, quality material, two things can happen. If the editor's in a good mood, he'll write back and politely tell the author to stuff it. If he's in a bad mood, it goes in the bin. And this system works fine at the moment, because hardly anybody writes in anyway. You see, English comics fans don't like English comics,

generally. You get one or two guys who like one or two strips, but the majority of fans like American comics, and only American comics. Now, this is a pretty pointless attitude, because the American editors know their markets too.... and if the combined efforts of a considerably larger group of American fans can't bring about changes in their own country, what are people going to be able to do in a country that makes up a very small portion of that market?

So as far as the editors are concerned, comic fans, you're out of your age-group. You're hung up on a medium most of which is intended for kids, and you can't improve it or turn it to your taste because you're such a minute fraction of the readership.

So, if you can't do anything that way, maybe you can be sneaky and try and influence the writers and artists. But comic fandom is unfortunate in that very few professionals are involved in it... this could well be because fandom has little to offer the English professional.

If an English professional artist goes to a comic convention, he can't talk to fans about English comics because they're just not interested in what he's got to say, they're too hung up on the U.S. scene.

Why should he bother with them at all?

So it seems you can't change



anything in the normal commercial run of things - the Beano and Dandy etc.-- so somehow you've got to provide an alternative and then persuade people that your alternative is a workable proposition.

The obvious tools are the fanzines, the amateur magazines. What are they doing? They're writing formula-ridden, hack-written articles about formula-ridden, hack-written strips published in the Forties, in a style totally irrelevant to the current trend. Or they're reprinting, many times over, news that can be had from one U.S. fanzine. Or what happened at the last convention. Or the comparative prices of old comics. In short, they're writing about everything except what matters... the comics of now, the techniques, the medium itself. Yes, old comics are nice things to have, but comics have changed beyond all recognition since the so-called "Golden Age" of comics. The comics of now are the ones that matter, the ones that affect the trends, the ones you've got to keep abreast of. Kick the nostalgia out of comic fandom and you might get somewhere.

There is little or no authoritative critical writing in English comics fandom today. Nobody is writing seriously of the techniques, the styles, the medium, themes, symbolism. The professional writer, artist or editor in this country is an adult; you're not going to influence him, change his point of view, or even interest him if you're not speaking on his level. And speaking on his level does not mean pissing around with sub-teenage articles on what Batman did in 1943! Comic fanzines have got to change dr-

astically, and soon...

If you get your fanzine up to an adult level, if the quality is good enough for it to be sent to a professional or editor with a reasonable chance of it actually being looked at, then you've got yourself a tool. But how do you use it? Well you've got the critical writings, that's a start...you can get some ideas over that way. But things get changed by deeds, by examples, rather than by words.

You know what you want to see, so go ahead and do it. Even if the execution is a little crude, the thing to do is to actually get the idea in concrete form. If there's anything in the idea it'll start shining through. And once the idea gets around you can start influencing things.

Also, fanzines producing strips like that provide good training grounds for future writers and artists - already, many fans in the States have reached professional status - and one or two over here, as well - and the more ex-fans you can get into the professional set-up, the more sympathetic people there will be to influence. And that is why fan-fiction, original art and so on should be encouraged as much as possible - people who put down fan-fiction make me sick. Far rather that people work creatively than produce incestuous fanzines concerned merely with the activities of their fellow fans.

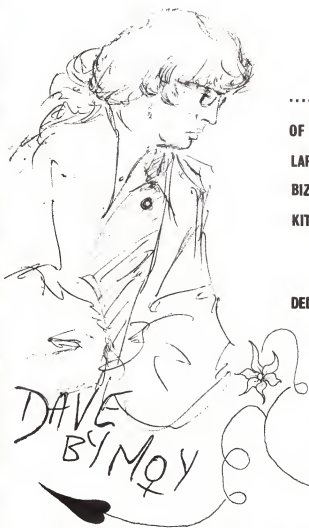
There'll always be things like The Dandy on the market - that won't ever change. But one day someone's going to notice the things that are being done in the non-profit magazines and wonder if the same thing can't be done commercially. And if that purpose is ever to be attained, you've got to work for it - not sit around vegetable-like and look on!



ART

By

DAVID EDWARD BRITTON

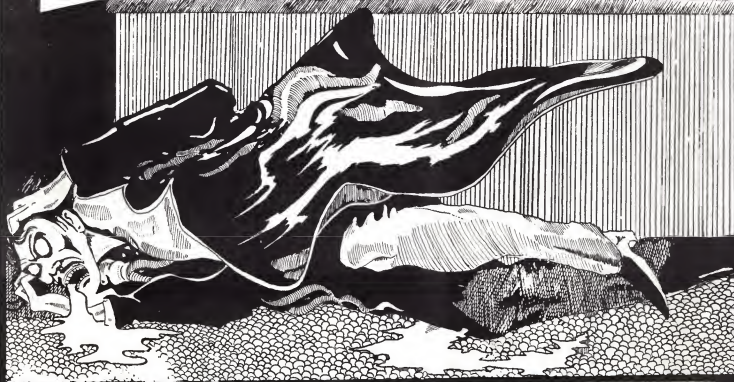


..... BEING A WHOLESOME COLLECTION
OF ILLUSTRATIONS FOR ALL THE FAMILY;
LARGELY SELF-INDULGENT; QUAINLY
BIZARRE . . . ADMIRERS OF INTELLECTUAL
KITSCH WILL GO FOR THIS.

DEDICATED TO

CHARLES & LINDA PARTINGTON
...FOR CONTINUED FRIENDSHIP
AND MORAL SUPPORT.

Dave Britton

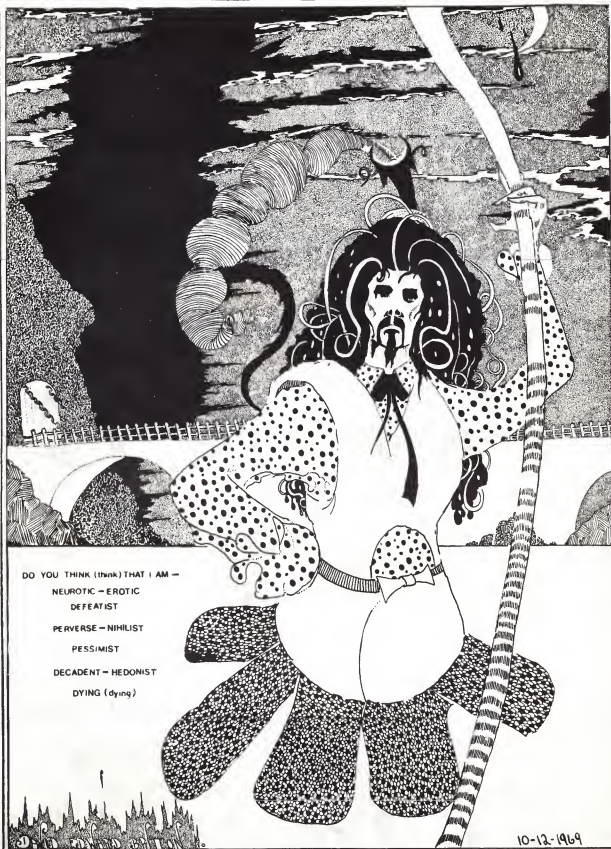


(Statement of fact) MERVYN FALL'S TO THE GROUND.
(Question) WAS IT **MURDER**?
(SOLUTION TO PROBLEM) Let him **LIE** there.

**Name the odd composer
out; and why?**

**Schoenberg, Schubert,
Sibelius, Strauss,
Stravinsky, Stockhausen,**





DO YOU THINK (think) THAT I AM —
NEUROTIC — EROTIC
DEFEATIST
PERVERSE — NIHILIST
PESSIMIST
DECADENT — HEDONIST
DYING (dying)

10-12-1969





**Hang up for
the Groupie-
Gobblers.
Is it
Coprophagic
or not.**

DAVID E. BURTON — 14-11-1969





paranoja
1967
style



Return of the "Madonna and Child."

DAVID EDWARD BARTON 9-11-67

The 'Ghostel.'

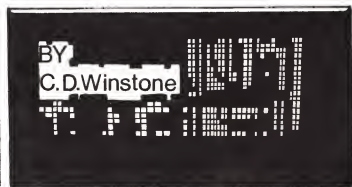
It appears that in Scarborough, in recent years, there was a badly haunted hotel called 'The Palace'. I first heard about it on t.v.- the hotel was being demolished, and the men working on the demolition turned in reports of many weird happenings. The most unsettling thing was the behaviour of the hotel's main lift; during the evenings throughout the demolitions it would occasionally go up and down, stopping, despite the electric supply being cut off, at each floor. This was said to happen both on the way up and on the way down. Strange...especially as the rope drum at the top of the lift was never reported as ever revolving! Some people from the local psychic research organisation visited the hotel to investigate the hauntings and placed a ball of clay on the drum and marked the cable that moved the cage with white chalk. After it had been reported that the cage had moved up and down the shaft, they checked their equipment and apparently nothing had been moved.

Another aspect of the sequence of the hauntings was the behaviour of a visitor's dog. It apparently became very upset when made to pass by the lift doors on all floors. There was a sort of balcony around the inside of the hotel's foyer- in fact a balcony for each of the six floors- and all of the balcony went around the foyer itself. Thus, the lift doors all faced across the balcony and overlooked the main foyer of the hotel. One of the film team took his dog to see how it behaved inside the hotel. It seemed quite a carefree mutt, and didn't seem to care when it was taken into the hotel. But on the second floor, right in front of the lift doors, it had to be dragged along the balcony. It seemed to recover its spirits once it was well

past the lift doors, but was very anxious to get away from the area. There was no balustrade on the one side, and the lift doors were wide open. Thus it is possible that the dog was just scared of the height disclosed. The lift cage was at the bottom of the shaft- buried under a ton or so of rubble - the men working on the demolition had wrecked the lift in an effort to stop it's unearthly behaviour.

The workmen did not work at night - more than once a man had reported hearing strange sounds late at night. He had told of hearing a man and woman arguing most violently, and of running footsteps just outside of the room in which he was sleeping.

There was not much given in the way of the history of the hotel. All that was told was that in 1886, there were the bodies of some twenty-two lifeboat men laid out in the foyer following a sea tragedy, and as is usual in most hotels I suppose, there were a few murders. Early in the century a woman killed her husband, a cook hanged himself and a servant-girl was murdered and hidden under a bed. And another death occurred when a woman hurled herself out of the lift doors over the balcony and onto the foyer floor. Yes, that's right - from the second floor. END



WHAT OF H.P. LOVECRAFT?

by Autolycus—

Reprinted from "THE SCIENCE FICTION FAN" No. 42, Jan. 1940.

I, too, never knew Lovecraft. Though I have read his masterpieces of darkling fantasy, abhorrent evil and loathsome cults, though I have followed his gigantic strides toward the goal he finally reached - genius-, though I have been a humble admirer since his works first appeared in *Weird Tales* some fifteen years ago, (I had already been through the First World War and three other campaigns when the first issue of *Weird* startled a realism weary world - and that should date me as one of the oldest fans), yet I admired from afar and could not summon up courage even to write to one of the most amazing literary phenomena ever to enter American literary history.

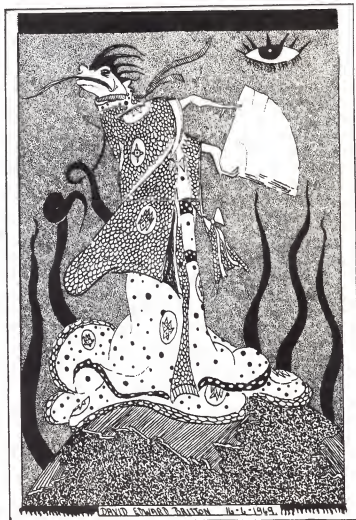
Perhaps it was best that way. At times I deeply regret not having met Lovecraft face to face or to have had the honour of receiving one of his inestimable letters, yet perhaps it is best that I can view his writings dispassionately, as literature, without being dazzled by the aura of his personality. In this way, I can tilt a lance with J.B. Michel without a feeling of personal rancour. I am no sycophant, no Boswell.

To what does Michel object in his article on Lovecraft, appearing in the November ((1939)) 'FAN'? Let me quote part of it - "Lovecraft was the deadly enemy of all that to me is everything - gazing with suppressed hate upon a great new world which placed more value upon the sanitary condition of a bathing fixture than all the greasy gold and jewels etc..."

As I read it, Michel is disturbed and angered not by Lovecraft the master of fantasy and horror, not by Lovecraft the alchemist who made words glow with a supernal light, but by a Lovecraft whose interest was in the past, in the imagination, rather than in the present or the (we hope) glories of the future. In other words, Michel condemns Lovecraft

for not taking his place in the hurly-burly of today, and thus we are brought face-to-face with the most discussed, most troublesome problem of modern literature. Shall all writing be class conscious, or shall the occasional man of letters be permitted to remain in his ivory tower and send out to the world below words of beauty and glamour? Shall all feel toward the recluse what Auden does towards Housman in his famous (or infamous) poem beginning :-

"No-one - not even Cambridge - was to blame".



Or shall we permit the poet, the wizard of words, a leeway not granted other mortals?

There are two answers. The first is obvious, that is, the man of genius will write what his inmost being generates and impel outward his deepest thoughts, without regard to the clamour or disdain of the crowd. Villon from the dunghill sang of purity and truth. (Of course he sang of other things too). Poe, from madness, gave forth unsurpassed words of mystery and terror. Cervantes from prison sent forth his romance of the simple but loveable knight. Yes, the man of genius will write as he chooses; neither contempt nor fear will persuade him to be false to his urge.

The second answer, though not so obvious, seems to me to be equally true. I maintain that no reader should attempt to influence the course of a writer's thought or output. We can criticise a writer's ability, we can condemn his failure to preserve high artistic and aesthetic standards, but we cannot be permitted to dictate what he writes, his topic, his subject, his mode of treatment. We can depreciate his use of tools, but not the object he is trying to make. As well criticise grass for being green, the stars for twinkling. Those are in the nature of things, and so is a writer's creative urge. He must say certain things. If they are expressions of class consciousness, well and good. If they are imagery, illusion or hallucination, equally well and good. I emphasise, we can criticise how an author uses words but not why he uses them.

As a matter of fact, if all writing were to become class conscious, we would lose a universe of beauty, of grandeur, of exquisite aesthetic satisfaction. The same is true of music. Heaven knows, Handel and Brahms, Palestrina and Bach, (who were other-worldly conscious), Ravel and Stravinsky were not, in their music, class conscious. We would, if differences of opinion were allowed, (and this is hardly likely in a totalitarian state), have an unending quarrel, an everlasting polemic that would weary and bore to stupefaction the unlucky reader. God forbid that literature should ever be restricted to one subject. On the other



hand, if (as is most likely in a totalitarian state) no differences were allowed, we would be driven insane by the iteration and reiteration of one topic. I like a clarinet, but I don't want to hear only one note on it ad infinitum and ad nauseum.

To repeat, writers of the highest skill will write exactly what they please (unless restrained by force, and that, of course, would spell the end of genuine literature), and we, as readers, should be grateful at the bounteous repast set before us - not a one-dish diet, not a Barmecide feast, but a sumptuous banquet of diverse dishes. Who would dine on ice-cream only...or tripe?

Lovecraft was a man of genius - I daresay no-one will dispute that statement. In his ivory tower (though it was but a couple of rooms in a Providence house) he sat dreaming. His mind travelled immeasurable distances in time

and space, he saw vistas of magnificence as well as of horror which are forever beyond the visions of most of us. We see reflected in words - magic words though they be - what he saw in dazzling brilliance. Who would deny him the right to dream and to record his dreams in imperishable pages? Who would stultify his skill by diverting it into unwanted channels? Who would dare demand an earthly class consciousness of one who, in spirit, was not of this earth? Who would insist that Cthulu speak the language of Karl Marx - or of the Union League Club?

I have no quarrel with Michel or with the class conscious writers. A Steinbeck, a Dos Passos, a Spender, they are invaluable in these days of travail and searching query when clouds darken the earth, and the future is bleak. We need writers to clang their hammer of words on the anvils of our minds, to drive home the dire necessity of setting our house in order so that civilisation will not perish. Yes, we need such men to send out glowing, angry words in order to goad us to peace, security and happiness for all and not only for the few.

But we need others as well. We need a Robert Frost who sings quietly of a New England countryside as well as we need a Robinson Jeffers whose lighting illuminates - and cleanses - dark places. We need the gentle humour of a John Holmes, the historical aloofness.

vampire! Cont. from Pgs.

ture and runs to the door. The door opens before her, and another copy of her lover stands there, this one without the vampire teeth. This is too much for the girl and she faints. In the resulting fight, her real lover is knocked unconscious, and the vampire takes the girl with him to the laboratory. The vampire, as it turns out, is the grandfather of the castle lord, who was searching for a cure for the sickness of vampirism. He recognises in the unconscious girl his dead wife, who has been so for 200 years. Meanwhile, back at the laboratory, the second murdered girl, now also a vampire, has no intention of losing her place as the vampire's maitresse. The vampire simply sticks a stake through her

of a Neil Swanson, or the detachment of a Santayana, just as much as we need the biting, fiery language of the reformer or radical. Balances sustains sanity. Variety means richness.

And we need Lovecraft just as he is. He lived in a world of his own, a world of past and future, a world of other dimensions, an alien, unreal world where unhuman entities prowled. He was set aside from the hustle of today, from our social and economic problems. He took no part in present struggles. Why not? Surely to fight in the cause of justice and righteousness there are enough warriors in this world to permit an occasional faery mind to roam as it will in time and space. We need "bathroom fixtures in sanitary condition", yes, we need a thousand things to better the unhappy lot, the desperate plight of countless millions who are now downtrodden or outcasts. You and I, all of us, can strive to improve the world, to provide the 'freedom' and 'equality' which our founding forefathers wrote into the most matchless social document ever produced. But I for one - and I am confident that the majority of fans are with me - will not agree that the magic, the glamour, the fantastic genius of a man like Lovecraft should be distorted or diverted into strange channels. We have too few human beings who can penetrate the unknown realm of unreality and faery. Let us cherish and preserve them. ~~>=<~~ END

heart and is just about to take a bite out of his new victim when the castle lord breaks into the laboratory. After some minutes of boxing and judo, the vampire succeeds in striking the young man down and begins to strangle him, when the man manages to tear the curtains from a small window. A sunbeam finds its way to the vampire, who promptly crumbles into a skeleton and then is gone into empty air. Boy and girl find each other, and a happy ending to all. It isn't exactly a badly made movie, but is annoyingly slow moving, interrupted by lots of senseless talk, some never finished strip scenes and a vampire who is far from frightening. The plot leaves many loose ends, which could be due, however, to cutting. Cutting a half-hour more of the film couldn't have made anything worse!



THE LAST ROMANTIC —
CLARK ASHTON SMITH
an article by S.J. Sackett.

Reprinted from THE FANTASY SAMPLER no.4, JUNE 1956.

The late Edwin Markham, author of "The Man with the Hoe" and other poems, once called Clark Ashton Smith "the greatest American poet." Benjamin De Casseres ranked Smith as a poet with Poe, Baudelaire, Shelley, Rimbaud, Keats and Blake.

And yet, as George Stirling--himself once the leading contender for the laurel in this country, at least in the eyes of H.L. Mencken--has pointed out, "to our everlasting shame, he is entirely neglected and almost unknown."

The busy circles of professional aesthetes have never heard of Smith. The not-so-high-brows, who get their introduction to modern poetry through the anthologies of Oscar Williams and Louis Untermeyer, will not find him in the indexes to those volumes. At the best, you may get a facetious, "Smith? Smith? The name is familiar."

It is clear to those who know Smith's poetry and prose that the reason for his undeserved eclipse is purely a lack of timing. He lived at the wrong time. If he had been born in 1793, instead of a hundred years later, you would have studied him in your undergraduate English survey course. But the currents of his age have passed him by. He never heard about the wasteland; he thought it was a garden all along.

For Clark Ashton Smith is the last of the Romantic poets. There are other writers of traditional verse, but none of them are really Romantics as Smith is. In an anything-but-Romantic age, it is no wonder that his talents have been too little appreciated. He has refused to conform to the patterns of Pound or the accents of Eliot. He has gone on in the great traditions of poetry no matter what his contemporaries do. He has chosen, deliberately, to be unconfinned by his historical period and to write for all time, if not for his age. It is, therefore, not wholly surprising that his age ignores him.

The general tone of Smith's poetry can best be described by the words fin de siècle. He is a brother-in-arms of Oscar Wilde, Swinburne, D. G. Rossetti and the other "decadents" of the turn of the century. He is a translator of Baudelaire and often writes of his own garden of evil in much the same way. Through these Bunthornes of the gay nineties, he looks back also to the

Romantics, to Keats and Poe and Coleridge, and through them also to Milton.

He is, of course, derivative. His detractors--who have been surprisingly vocal, considering the little impact Smith has made on the world of letters--have deprecated him as "a creative scholar". And this, in a sense, he is. Surely it is an achievement in itself to be so good a "creative scholar" as Smith is. After all, one could say the same for Eliot.



But Smith is original, too. Or, rather, if he is not original, neither were Tennyson or Keats or Poe or Coleridge, for they were all derivative poets as well. There is something about Smith's work at best which marks it as distinctive, although it is true that in some poems his influences are incompletely amalgamated. And it is dangerous to try to find a source for all of Smith; his affinity to certain writers has occasionally led critics to assign to him influences in other poets whom he has never read.

Smith does not attempt to mirror the neuroses or frustrations of his age. He does not try to express his reactions to the ills of our world, except in his withdrawal from them. He has no political or psychological axe to grind. All he wants to do is write poetry, write beautiful poetry, write poetry with singing words that will delight the reader. He wants to amuse, in the most noble meaning of the word, just as Poe and Coleridge amused their readers with haunting beauty.

Smith also writes prose. He does not write short stories so much as short prose tales, more in the vein of Poe than of De Maupassant. The style is the important thing in Smith's fiction; he is concerned with his diction, with getting the right word in the right place. Character does not interest him at all, and plot is only the framework for style. The best of his stories, however are very good, once you have made the initial concession to judge Smith's work on its own merits and not to measure him against contemporary followers of Hemingway.

With Smith, as with Poe, the aim of fiction is the creation of a single emotional effect. Also as with Poe, the effect Smith most often aims at is terror. Whether he achieves his effect or



not depends on the amount of co-operation he can extort from his reader. You have to approach his fiction with standards different from those by which you judge most modern writers. You have to be willing to make that suspension of disbelief which constitutes poetic faith. But once you have made that effort of mind, Smith's prose will carry you into lands of the long ago and far away where strange and wonderful things happen. It is the music of Smith's language

rather than any empathy with the characters, which most frequently achieves the effect. For this reason, Smith's stories deserve more than any others in English since Poe's to be called "prose poems".

And yet these tales are not all emptiness. There is some substance to them. Smith has things to say about the nature of humanity and human existence, and he says them in his own way. The vision and the expression are both unique.

They are, frankly, fantasies. In the letter column of *Wonder Stories* for 1932-33, Smith defended fantasy against more realistic forms of literary art. Speaking of realism, Smith said, "The best possibilities in the correlation of observed data about life and human problems with inspired speculation as to the unknown forces of cosmic causes and effect....The evil lies in a meaningless Dreiserism, an inartistic heap-ing of superficial facts or alleged facts which...may be erroneous or, at least, too incomplete to permit the

safe drawing of dogmatic inferences... It is partly because of this shifting, unstable ground on which the ground of realism stands, that I regard pure, frank fantasy as a more valid and lasting art-expression of the human mind."

It is, then, his considered judgement that imaginative writing - fantasy - is the only enduring type of art. As he has put it elsewhere, "The animals alone, without having imagination, have no escape from reality. From parable to psycho-analyst, from poet to rag-picker, we are all in flight

from the real. Truth is what we desire it to be, and the facts of life are a masquerade in which we imagine that we have identified with the maskers." On epistemological grounds then, because it is impossible to ascertain reality, Smith has written entirely in the fantastic vein..

Smith's style of prose has been accused of "verbosity" and of being "Byzantine". It has been called "intolerably arty." In defence of his ornate style, Smith has written that "it is designed to produce effects of lang-

uage and rhythm which could not possibly be achieved by a vocabulary restricted to what is known as 'basic English'. As Strachey points out (in his essay on Sir Thomas Browne), a style composed largely of words of Anglo-Saxon origin tends to a spondaic rhythm, 'which by some mysterious law, reproduces the atmosphere of ordinary life'. An atmosphere of remoteness, mystery, and exoticism is more naturally evoked by a style with an admixture of Latinity, lending itself to more varied and sonorous rhythms, as well as to subtler shades, tints and nuances of meaning..."

If those are Smith's purposes, certainly it would be a mistake for him to adopt a monosyllabic style. And, in an age dominated by Hemingway, it is difficult for the average reader to see that such a style as Smith's can achieve the effects it's author wants. Such, however, is the case; and the styles of Poe and Sir Thomas Browne, which have influenced Smith, are evidences.

Structurally, most of his stories are distinctly "tales" rather than short stories; one turns instinctively to the French word 'conté' to describe them. The short story, in our day, is either a smoothly plotted but artificially constructed narrative or a "slice of life" without much plot at all. Smith's contés fit neither definition. They have a plot, but it is usually not dominant; it merely provides the showcase for other elements. In construction it is less like what one is used to in modern fiction than like folktales or traveller's yarns.

The novice reader of Smith needs one caution: these contés need to be read slowly and seldom. Smith needs to be sipped and enjoyed. You cannot read him hurriedly, or you will lose some of the bouquet. Similarly, if you read him for too long at a sitting, you will probably find that you have lost your taste for him, just as too much sweetness cloyes. But read with attention and sympathy, and dipped into occasionally, his stories can be a rewarding experience.

Some day, a long time from now, there may be another Romantic Review. People may be less concerned

than at present to find the poet who can most satisfactorily complete fuzzy minded confusion. They may again turn to poets whose chief interest is in beauty and entertainment.

If so, it will be with considerable interest that the poems of Clark Ashton Smith will be discovered. "Here," they will say, "in the middle of the age of Naturalism, a man trod on stars and looked beyond the world about him into the realms of imagination. Wholly dissociated from the nervous currents of his period, he had for his only concern the creation of pure poetry. Wholly disregarded by his contemporaries, he can now, with the perspective of history, be recognised as one of the worlds fine poets."

With the life of Clark to theauty will ied and

at judgement, long devotion Ashton Smith cause of be- be justifi- rewarded. END



DONT MISS OUT!

SUBSCRIBE TO C.T. — Costs no more to come by post!!



MAILED FLAT IN A STURDY (?) ENVELOPE

--cut-along-dotted-line--

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

ENCLOSED IS:-

3/6d for issue No.2 ☐

7/- " " issue No. 2+3 ☐

10/- " " " -2,3+4 ☐

(please tick relevant circle)

Now RUSH this to the
editorial address!!!



DRAWING DESIGN: D.F. BRITTON - 1970



THE SCREAM
BY J. L. S. JONES